

Message Text

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SUMMARY: POLITICAL PARTIES WERE SLOW OFF THE MARK IN FIRST WEEK OF AN ELECTORAL RACE WHICH WILL END WITH BALLOTING APRIL 17. WITH NO MAJOR SHIFTS IN PARTY FORTUNES CONSIDERED LIKELY, PUBLIC SPECULATION TURNS TO THE QUESTION OF THE PROBABLE COMPOSITION OF THE NEXT GOVERNMENT. THE SOCIALIST, OPPOSING A TRIPARTITE GOVERNEMENT WHICH WOULD INCLUDE LIBERALS, ARE SEEKING TO RALLY "PROGRESSIVE" FORCES IN WALLONIA. TAILORED TO THIS PURPOSE, THE PSB ELECTORAL PLATFORM PRESSUED MARCH 17 CONTAINES ELEMENTS TERMED BY THE CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC PRESS AS "RADICAL", "BLINDLY PARTISAN." END SUMMARY.

1. VIRTUALLY ALL POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT SLOW OFF THE MARK IN THE FIST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN LEADING TO THE APRIL 17 NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. PARTY LEADERS HAVE CONCENTRATED ON PLANNING THEIR CAMPAIGNS AND DRAWING UP CANDIDATE LISTS. OF THOSE LISTS OF CANDIDTES SO FAR ANNOUNCED, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SURPRISES.

2. EARLY PULSE-TAKING BY POLITICALL PROFESSIONALS HAS SIGNED NO STRIKING SHIFTS IN PARTY FORTUNES AT THE POLLS. CURRENT SPECULATION
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CENTERS IN THE LIKELY COMPOSITION OF THE NEXT GOVERNING COALITION. PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS SAID IN A TV INTERVIEW MARCH 10 THAT HE EXPECTED THE NEXT GOVERNMENT TO BE TRIPARTITE, PRESUMABLY SOCIAL CHRISTIAN (CVP/PCS), SOCIALIST(PSB) AND LIBERAL. HOWEVER, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE WALLOON SOCIALISTS REJECTED AT ONCE THE IDEA OF SOCIALIST COALITION WITH THE LIBERALS. AND PSB CO-PRESIDENT COOLS,

IN A SPEECH AT CHARLEROI MARCH 14, OPENLY INVITED THE LABOR-ORIENTED LEFT WING OF PSC TO DESERT THE CHRISTIAN PARTY AND COME OVER EITHER TO PSB OR THE RASSEMBLEMENT WALLON (RW). THIS WAS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF WALLOON SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN STRATEGY, WHICH SEEKS TO RALLY ALL "PROGRESSIVE," I.E. LEFT-LEANING, VOTERS IN WALLONIA INTO A PSB/RW MAJORITY IN THE REGION. THIS AD HOC ALLIANCE WAS FORMALIZED IN LUXEMBOURG PROVINCE THIS WEEK WHEN PSB AND RW DECIDED TO PRESENT A SINGLE LIST OF CANDIDATES IN THAT PROVINCE. MANWHILE, THE SOCIALIST LABOR FEDERATION FGTB ANNOUNCED IT WOULD HOLD A CONGRESS ON APRIL 23 - IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ELECTIONS - TO DEFINE THE FGTB'S "PROGRESSIVE ALTERNATIVE" TO PAST GOVERNEMENT POLICY. FINALLY THE PSB ON MARCH 17 MADE PUBLIC A 133-PAGE DOCUMENT CONTAINING ITS ELECTORAL PROGRAM. THE PROGRAM CONTAINS A NUMBER OF MEASURES TERMED BY THE CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC LA LIBRE BELGIQUE AS "RADICAL" AND "BLINDLY PARTISAN." AMONG THE MEASURE ALLUDED TO WERE: WORKER CONTROL

IN INDUSTRY, STATE CONTROL OF THE ENERGY AND FINANCE SECTORS, PARTIAL FISCALIZATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY, HIGHER INHERITANCE TAXES, AND A TAX ON WEALTH.

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